Scotch Plains NJ

WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

Published by Renna Media, LLC. On-line at RennaMedia.com

Issue 106 • July 2024

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HALL OF FAME HONORS DISTINGUISHED GRADUATES

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School was pleased to induct 13 impressive alumni, including an Emmy Award-winning director/producer, the nation's first Muslim-American judge, a former NFL player, and a former Scotch Plains mayor, into the school's Hall of Fame on May 9, 2024.

The inductees were honored at a special ceremony in the SPFHS Auditorium, led by former Governor Donald DiFrancesco, also a SPFHS Hall of Fame member.

"We are lucky here at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School to have successful and engaged alumni who our students can emulate and learn from," said Principal Dr. David Heisey. "It was my privilege and honor to welcome these 13 alumni into the Hall of Fame and to celebrate the contributions they have made to our school community and as leaders in every area of society."

Superintendent Dr. Joan Mast said it was especially heart-warming to hear from many inductees about the teachers and community members who helped guide and shape their career and life paths. Each inductee is honored with a plaque hung in the hallway at SPFHS.

"The Hall of Fame provides an opportunity to celebrate the unique and valuable contributions of SPFHS alumni, while also inspiring current and future generations to dream and strive for excellence," Mast said. "You could feel the legacy and pride of SPF as we welcomed home these inductees."

The following SPFHS alumni were inducted

- Barbara Adams Austin '57 Founder of the Fanwood Nature Preserve & professional artist, gardener and writer
- George Falkowski '78 NY Emmy Award winner in sports and TV news
- Daniel Catullo III '90 Emmy Award-winning director and producer
- Peter Kuran '74 Academy Award winner for developing a process to restore color film
- Michael Richard Jackson '65 Medical innovator, entrepreneur and inventor of **PureWick**



(above) Hall of Fame inductees present for May 9, 2024, ceremony.

- Nate Jones '00 Rhodes Scholar nominee and former NFL player
- Gene Schiller '50 Former athletic director at SPFHS and Scotch Plains Township Director of Recreation
- Hon. Zahid N. Quraishi '93 First Muslim-American judge in U.S.
- Richard Wetherald '54 Research associate in the field of greenhouse warming; named Meteorologist Professional in 2007
- Erroll Southers '74 Professor of the Practice in National Home Security, Director of the Safe Communities Institute and Homegrown Violent Extremism Studies at the University of Southern California
- Mike Marino '81 Actor and comedian inducted into the NJ Comedy Hall of Fame; USO Bob Hope Comedy Award winner
- Mauro Checchio '42 Former Mayor of Scotch Plains, instrumental in founding a Kean University Campus in China
- Rich Feinberg '79 Long and decorated career in the television industry

The SPFHS Hall of Fame will continue to accept nominations for future classes. If you know an alum who has demonstrated noteworthy personal or professional achievements, please contact the school for the nomination form.

If you are interested in being part of the Hall of Fame Committee that recruits nominees and selects future hall of famers, please express your interest by contacting Robin Broadbent, assistant to the superintendent, at rbroadbent@spfk12.org or 908-232-6161, Ext. 41103.



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MILITARY FAMILIES SACRIFICE TOO

Scotch Plains NJ WHAT'S HAPPENING MONTHLY

Renna Media LLC, Publishers 202 Walnut Ave., Cranford, NJ 07016

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Michael D Boll, NJVN President

For the last few years, the New Jersey Veterans Network (NJVN) has been helping veterans with resources and assistance with their mental health conditions. Over time we came to realize that the veteran's family was being affected by their struggles as well. Our team had to learn how to include their family members in our outreach efforts. We lose 22 veterans each day to suicide, and they leave behind grieving families. Recently, we decided to make sure all veteran family members can use the same resources that our team has available for veterans. Sometimes we forget about the sacrifices our veteran families have to make and this country should appreciate them for this.

One thing our team decided to do was to have Gold Star families meet disabled veterans at our events, so they can work together and form a bond. This effort was extremely affective and immediately brought joy to both the Gold Star families and to the disabled veterans. By adding veteran family members to the team, it allows us to work together on our peer support and recreational therapy programs. We are honored to have veteran family members to work alongside us and know they are just as committed with helping our veterans live a better way of life.

If you need assistance, or would like to join the team as a volunteer, please send us your name, email, and phone number to NJVN1775@gmail.com.

ABOUT NEW JERSEY VETERANS NETWORK

We are a group of veterans and volunteers dedicated to helping our veterans and their families live better lives. Our mission is to identify veterans and connect them with resources and programs designed to meet their unique set of needs. Help us save Vets! We are always looking for volunteers, with various skills, to join the team. If you are a veteran or family member that is in need of assistance; or are interested in volunteering, would like us to speak at your event, or contribute to our mission, call 973-332-1556 or email NJVN1775@gmail.com. To learn more visit njvn.org.



(above) Michael D Boll, NJVN President, with Dina and Tom Duffy who lost their son Tom Duffy, a Marine Corporal and Afghanistan War veteran. Courtesy photos

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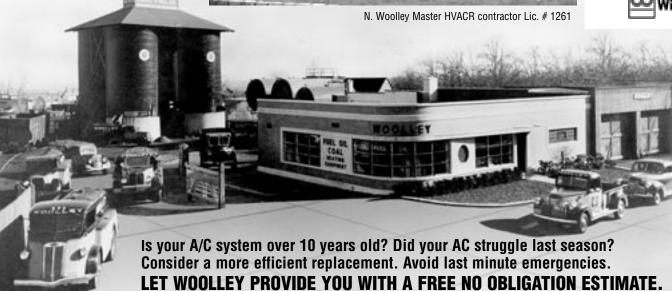


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HISTORY CLUB HELPS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

On Wednesday, May 22nd, the Scotch Plains Fanwood High School History Club presented a check for more than \$1,000 which they raised at an event at the Osborn Cannonball House Museum on Saturday, May 11th. The Historical Society officers, directors, and members wish to thank the member of the Scotch Plains Fanwood High School History Club for their work.



(above, l-r) Historical Society President Dave Bierman receives check from History Club Co-President Spencer Martin



(above) Members of the Scotch Plains
Fanwood High School History Club at the fund
raising event on May 11th at the Osborn
Cannonball House Museum.

Courtesy photo



COLE SCHOOL SHOWS "ALL TO HERE BELONG"

Scotch Plains Fanwood Public Schools

Cole's Elementary School held its First Annual Multicultural night on April 18th, and it was filled with smiling faces and full bellies. The night consisted of an Indian tabla drum performance, a performance from the Montclair State University West African Drumming and Dance Ensemble under the direction of Robert Levin, savory to sweet selections of homemade bites, and information about our diverse student background.

As you walked through the Coles Multipurpose room, it felt as though you were visiting the favorite parts of our families' heritage. Tables were set with indigenous decor, fun facts creatively displayed about each country, small snacks made with love, families dressed in clothing that represents their culture, and most importantly our students and caregivers coming together to share their culture.

At Coles, we're so lucky to have not just an enthusiastic community, but an extremely diverse one, always willing to jump-in and come together for experiences like this. The evening was a wonderful way to kick-off a night we look forward to celebrating in future years. We truly strive to encompass our "All to Here Belong" motto in the Scotch Plains - Fanwood School District.

The night would not have been possible without the dedicated Multicultural Committee who spent endless hours working together to create a meaningful, inclusive and memorable night, as well as our participating families who spent time and care in creating a table that represented their heritage. Lastly, a huge thank you to Mrs. Fehte and the wonderful Custodial Staff for supporting our endeavors to bring the Coles community together.





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Alexander Allegra, Thomas Barnes, Julia Flowers, Heather Sherman, and Grace Sweeney received UNICO Memorial Scholarships, which are awarded based on a combination of academic excellence, participation in extracurricular activities, civic engagement, and financial need. Students attending a four-year college or university received a \$2,500 scholarship, and those attending a two-year post-secondary school

Submitted by Angelo Ucciferri

recently awarded its annual scholarships to seven

exceptional local high school students.

received a \$1,500 scholarship.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood UNICO chapter

All of this year's scholarship winners attend Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School and were selected through an anonymous voting process conducted by the members of Scotch Plains-Fanwood UNICO. The students and their families were recently honored at the chapter's monthly dinner meeting held at Cafe Gallo in Edison on May 28, 2024.

Amanda Baylock (Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School) and Gabriella Prati (Union Catholic

High School) were recipients of the UNICO Brian Piccolo Award, which recognizes exceptional student-athletes for their outstanding achievements both on and off the field. Selected by their respective high school's Athletic Director, Amanda and Gabriella distinguished themselves with their commitment to athletic and academic excellence. Recipients were awarded a \$500 scholarship and honored at a celebratory brunch held at The Gran Centurions in Clark on April 14. Brian Piccolo was an NFL player who tragically passed away in 1970 at age 26 from cancer, and the award carries on his legacy.

UNICO is the largest Italian-American service organization in the USA, and the Scotch Plains Fanwood chapter is celebrating its 50th year. To learn more about becoming a UNICO member or obtain additional information on UNICO events, please visit their official website at unicospf.org or email them at spfunico@gmail.com. By becoming a part of Scotch Plains-Fanwood UNICO, you can actively contribute to making a difference in the lives of students within the community.



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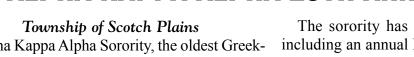


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ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, the oldest Greekletter organization established by African American college-educated women on the campus of Howard University in 1908, is marking the 25th anniversary of a local chapter in Scotch Plains.

Phi Eta Omega, the Scotch Plains Chapter of AKA, has carried out the international programs of the sorority in Scotch Plains and Greater Union County, NJ since its chartering on June 6,

The sorority has many programs of service including an annual Dignity Drive as part of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood MLK Day of Service; hosting a Teen Voter Town Hall in partnership the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Black Student Union and the National Pan-Hellenic Council of Central Jersey; offering mindfulness education programs offered in conjunction with the Scotch Plains Mayor's Wellness Campaign and replacing the headstone of a Revolutionary War freed slave at Scotch Plains Baptist Church.



(above) Members of Phi Eta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® pose with members of the Township Council to mark their 25th anniversary.

Courtesy photo



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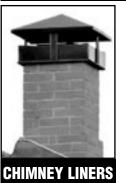


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\$60,000 IN GRANTS, STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League

The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League awarded a total of \$60,000 in student scholarships and grants to 19 Union County community organizations, including such well-known groups as the local Scotch Plains and Fanwood rescue squads and libraries. That brings the Service League's total giving to \$1.587 million since inception in 1973.

Included in the 2024 awards was \$24,000 in student scholarships presented to eight deserving high school seniors at the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Scholarship Awards Night on May 29. Students were selected for each of the \$3,000 scholarships based on a combination of their academic records and service to the community.

Scholarship recipients and the schools they will be attending in the fall are Justin Abadir – Liberty University; Hannah Baik – Seton Hall University; Hayley Blacker – University of Wisconsin; Kelly Stewart – University of Connecticut; Grace Sweeney – College of New Jersey; Sairah Llano – College of New Jersey; Katelyn Lester – University of Texas; and Alyssa Sapienza – University of South Carolina.

All proceeds for the grants and scholarships come from the generous giving of new and/or gently used items donated to the Thrift Shop at 1741 East Second Street and run by the all-volunteer Service League. The store has been a staple in downtown Scotch Plains for decades, offering good quality, reasonably priced merchandise to customers in need of household goods, toys, clothing for all ages and in all sizes, and much more.

Congratulations to all of the scholarship winners and to everyone in the community who helps the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League fulfill its mission to "Help Us Help Others" by volunteering, donating and/or purchasing merchandise at the Thrift Shop. New volunteers are particularly needed to keep the Thrift Shop running smoothly.

To learn more about the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League, the types of donations accepted and volunteer opportunities, please call the store at 908-322-5420.

You can also visit the Scotch Plains Thrift Shop web site scotchplainsthriftshop.weebly.com or "Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League" on Facebook.



(above, l-r) Recipients of The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League 2024 scholarships hold their award letters at the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Scholarship Awards Night on May 31. Scholars are Kelly Stewart, Hannah Baik, Sairah Llano, Hayley Blacker, Justin Abadir, Alyssa Sapienza, Katelyn Lester and Grace Sweeney. Courtesy photo









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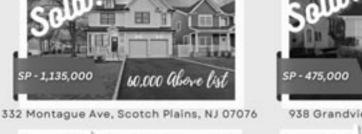


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In response to these numbers, CPSC's Pool Safely campaign is sharing simple water safety steps that families can take to prevent drownings, especially while many families are spending more time around backyard and portable pools this season.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's Pool Safely campaign urges parents and caregivers to follow the Pool Safely simple safety steps to prevent more drownings:

- Never leave a child unattended in or near water, and always designate an adult Water Watcher. This person should not be reading, texting, using a smartphone or be otherwise distracted. In addition to pools and spas, this warning includes bathtubs, buckets, decorative ponds, and fountains.
- If you own a pool or spa, be sure to install layers of protection, including a four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate.
- Learn how to perform CPR on children and adults. Many communities offer online CPR training.
- Learn how to swim and teach your child how to swim.
- Keep children away from pool drains, pipes and other openings to avoid entrapments.
- Ensure any pool and spa you use has drain covers that comply with federal safety standards and if you do not know, ask your pool service provider about safer drain covers.

Families can visit poolsafely gov for additional water safety tips to prepare for a summer that is safer and more fun.

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ODYSSEY OF THE MIND WORLD FINALS SUCCESS

Township of Scotch Plains

The Scotch Plains team secured fourth place at the Odyssey of the Mind- World Finals held at Iowa State University, Ames, IA. competition - in its 41st year - emphasizes creativity and teamwork and continues to be the largest international creative problem-solving competition in the world.

The Scotch Plains team competed against 56 other teams, including international teams,

(Poland, China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Netherlands, Germany and more) and many others from across America.

Our champs received a standing recognition and earned a permanent spot at the OOTM leader board - given only to the top six teams in every category.

Congrats to the Scotch Plains team: Arhaan Malviya, Alyssa Koganti, Myra Masand, Rudra Mair, Vihaan Malviya and Zia Shah!



(above) Scotch Plains team: Arhaan Malviya, Alyssa Koganti, Myra Masand, Rudra Mair, Vihaan Malviya and Zia Shah. Courtesy photo



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URGENT NEED FOR ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

Child Focus

The latest class of CASA volunteers were sworn in to advocate for youth in foster care on June 11, 2024.

Union County Superior Court Judge Rosalba Comas presided over the swearing-in of the newly trained volunteers, and each can now be assigned to work with children living in foster care through no fault of their own, advocating for their best interests and ensuring their needs are met while in the child welfare system.

The nonprofit organization Child Focus operates CASA of Passaic and Union Counties, and its goal is to provide a CASA volunteer for each of the more than 250 child-victims in Union County foster care. Currently, just 30 percent of these vulnerable infants, children, and teens have the continuity and support of a CASA volunteer serving as extra eyes and ears for judges hearing their cases. The need is critical for additional volunteers to step up and serve waiting children.

"We are proud to welcome this new group of volunteers to the CASA family," said Erica Fischer-Kaslander, Executive Director of Child Focus. "These individuals have taken concrete action to make a difference in the lives of children who have experienced immense trauma, having been removed from home through no fault of their own, often due to abuse or neglect. We look forward to working with our new advocates as they serve these vulnerable youth and urge more community members to follow their example by volunteering to support children in need."

Judge Comas expressed her gratitude for the CASA program and the volunteers' commitment to the children they serve. "If I really want to know what's happening with a child I listen to the CASA worker, because they are 100% in tune with everything that the child needs, and everything that's happening in the child's life," she shared. "Their job is to look out for the kids, represent the children's interest, and make sure that all of their needs are being addressed. It's not just whether they need clothes or whether they need toys, it's the bond. It's what they need emotionally, it's someone they can count on."

Since caseworkers, attorneys, and foster homes are ever-changing, the CASA volunteer – or advocate - is a much-needed constant in a child's life, committing to work with the child until they reach permanency in a stable home and the case closes. Children assigned a CASA volunteer are more likely to receive services, spend less time in the foster system, and experience significantly better outcomes than those without an advocate.

BECOMING A CASA - TRAINING SCHEDULED IN JULY

Becoming a CASA requires no special skills or background in child welfare. Child Focus provides thorough training on the ins and outs of advocating for abused and neglected children, and volunteers are fully supported by CASA program staff. Volunteers visit the children at least monthly and get to know the people in the child's life, such as foster parents, biological parents, teachers, therapists, and attorneys in family court judge that support the child's best

The first step to becoming an advocate is to attend an information session. Upcoming sessions will be held Monday, July 8 at 5:30 p.m. at the Elizabeth Public Library (Elmora Branch), 740 W Grand St, Elizabeth, NJ 07202; Thursday, July 11 at 5:30 p.m. at the Rahway Public Library, 2 City Hall Plaza in Rahway; Thursday July 25 at 5:30 p.m. at the Union County Colleen Fraser Building, 300 North Avenue E. in Westfield; or Monday July 1 at 10 a.m., Monday July 15 at 5:30 p.m., Wednesday July 24 at 12 p.m., and Wednesday July 31 at

order to make unbiased recommendations to the 5:30 p.m. at the Wayne Child Focus office, 415 Hamburg Turnpike, Suite D2. Register: casapassaicunion.org/info-session.

ABOUT CHILD FOCUS:

Child Focus prioritizes the needs and wellbeing of infants, children and teens impacted by, or at risk of, abuse or neglect by amplifying their voices and working toward lasting, permanent solutions that address their unique situations and provide support needed to thrive. This critical work is accomplished through three distinct but complementary programs: CASA of Passaic and Union Counties, NJ Safe Babies Court Team, and the Open Door Store. For more information about Child Focus, visit childfocusnj.org.



(above) The latest class of CASA volunteers were sworn in to advocate for youth in foster care on June 11, 2024. To learn more about becoming an advocate, info sessions are scheduled for July. For more information visit: casapassaicunion.org/info-session Courtesy photo

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NATIONAL GUN VIOLENCE AWARENESS DAY - JUNE 7

Township of Scotch Plains

The Scotch Plains Township Council issued a proclamation declaring the first Friday in June to be National Gun Violence Awareness Day in the

township to honor and remember all victims and crisis that costs the state \$5.3 billion each year, survivors of gun violence. of which \$168.9 million is paid by taxpayers.

New Jersey has 427 gun deaths every year, with a rate of 4.8 deaths per 100,000 people, a

crisis that costs the state \$5.3 billion each year, of which \$168.9 million is paid by taxpayers. New Jersey has the fifth lowest rate of gun deaths in the nation.

By wearing orange on June 7, 2024, Americans hope to raise awareness about gun violence and honor the lives of gun violence victims and survivors.



(above) The Scotch Plains Township Council issued a proclamation declaring the first Friday in June (June 7th) to be National Gun Violence Awareness Day.



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Community Access Unlimited

The 26th Annual Ira Geller Family Fun Day, hosted by Community Access Unlimited (CAU), drew an enthusiastic crowd of over 800 supporters, members, and staff to Warinanco Park on Saturday, May 18th.

The event delivered a day filled with joy and community spirit, with an aim of supporting CAU's essential services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) and at-risk youth. Activities offered enjoyment for all ages and all abilities; the park was made more accessible with a path for those using wheelchairs, and a new sensory station engaged attendees to stimulate and regulate their senses.

Mayor of Elizabeth, J. Christian Bollwage joined the celebration, lauding CAU Executive Director Bernadette Griswold for her dedicated leadership.

"Community Access helps direct services and housing opportunities to those who may have been on the margins—and because of all of you, you make this a reality," Bollwage said.

Participants enjoyed a variety of activities, including over a dozen games, two bouncy slides, a free photo booth, and lively music from CAU's resident DJ. The atmosphere was alive with families and friends reveling in the day's festivities, all while supporting a meaningful cause and commemorating CAU's 45th year of service to the community.

Tonya Hopson of Hillside, a CAU member since 1987, shared her personal journey and the profound impact CAU has had on her life.

As a teenager, Hopson aged out of the foster care system and found a lifeline in CAU, which provided housing and essential services. As an adult with a disability, employment support from CAU assisted her in securing a job at a Target where she has thrived for over 20 years. Reflecting on her experience, she said, "CAU has benefited me in growing better and growing up, and I have a place to live." On having a job coach, she added, "They come and see how I'm

doing, and if I need anything they're there to help me."



(above, l-r) CAU members, Tonya Hopson, Dianna Simms, and John Drescher attended CAU's Ira Geller Family Fun Day.

Courtesy photo

This year's Family Fun Day not only celebrated the memory of Ira Geller, a former CAU member and advocate, but also highlighted the significant contributions of CAU in improving the lives of over 3,000 individuals and families across New Jersey. Through housing, education, support services, employment, support coordination, and the Day Program, CAU continues to make a tangible difference in the community.

For more information on CAU and its programs, or to make a donation, please visit cauni.org.

ABOUT COMMUNITY ACCESS UNLIMITED

Community Access Unlimited (CAU), celebrating 45 years in 2024, supports people with disabilities in achieving full lives in the community. CAU provides support and gives voice to adults and youth who traditionally have little support and no voice in society. CAU helps people with housing, life skills, employment, money management, socialization and civic activities. CAU also supports opportunities for advocacy through training in assertiveness, decision-making and civil rights. CAU currently serves more than 3,000 individuals and families and is continually expanding its services to broaden the scope of its support.

For more information about CAU and its services, contact us by phone at 908.354.3040, online at cauni.org or by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202.



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and the Scotch Plains Fire Department.

The Township Council joined with EMS volunteers to mark the 50th-annual "EMT Week, from May 19-25.



Courtesy photo



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CALLING ALL SPFHS CLASS OF 1974: DUST OFF YOUR DANCIN' SHOES

Mark your calendars, Raiders! Our legendary 50th Reunion is just around the corner, and it's going to be a blast from the past that you won't want to miss.

- When: Saturday, October 26th, 2024
- Where: Embassy Suites Berkeley Heights, NJ
- Cost: Believe it or not, thanks to the generosity of some angelic classmates, it's only \$19.74 for YOU (and \$125 for your guest)!

Get ready for a night of reminiscing, reconnecting, and reliving those unforgettable moments:

Footloose and Fancy-Free: We may not be teenagers anymore, but we can still bust a move! Dance the night away to live music and reminisce about that epic 8-1 Football season (remember #3 in the State?!)

Kool and the Gang: Remember the marathon dance party with these chart-toppers as our house band? Get ready for a round two of musical magic!

Wolfman Jack Howls Again! Channel your inner Wolfman Jack and unleash your inner rock star with a night of unforgettable tunes.

Charlie Newman Fund Toast: Let's raise a glass to the Charlie Newman Fund and the incredible impact it's had on our community.

Wrestle Your Way Down Memory Lane: Didn't make the Wrestling Team (10-2, by the way!)? No problem! We'll have plenty of friendly competition (and reminiscing) for everyone.

Senior Work Day Rewind: Remember ditching class for a good cause? Relive the

(slightly rebellious) spirit of Senior Work Day!
"It's About Time" for a Reunion Play
Revival: Dust off your lines and relive the
magic of our original Senior Class Play!

We also have pre and post events, including Friday evening at the Stage House Inn with musical entertainment by classmates, a Saturday afternoon tour of the high school, and breakfast together on Sunday. This reunion is more than just a party; it's a chance to reconnect with the people who shaped your high school years. Don't miss out on this chance to relive the glory days and create new memories!

We can't wait to see you there! For more information and to RSVP, visit: sites.google.com/view/spfhs74reunion/home













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